

Some papers being read touching the granting of Licenses to American fishermen—

Hon. LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION said that the papers just read related to a matter connected with the vital interests of this Colony. He knew that there were many persons who faulted the Local Government for issuing Fishery Licenses last year; some even questioned their authority for granting them. The time had now arrived when this question should be ventilated. It was well known that the Reciprocity Treaty, though it might have turned the balance of trade against us, was of great advantage to the Island. But unfortunately, within the last few years that treaty had been abrogated; whether it arose from the war between the Northern and Southern States, or from the fact that that great people were under the impression that these Colonies could not exist without business relations with them, he was not prepared to say. There was some foundation, however, for the belief that the latter was the motive from which they acted, as a report had been laid before Congress which stated in effect that the suspension of the Reciprocity Treaty had not answered the expectations of its promoters, viz.; to draw the British Provinces into nearer political bonds with the United States, or in other words, lead us to knock at the door of Republican America for admission into the union. That idea had failed, and he believed there was a bright future before us if we only managed properly. The neighboring Provinces were driving as good a trade as before the abrogation of the treaty, while the trade of the United States had gone back, as might be seen by the reports laid before some of their state Legislatures, as well as those laid before Congress. But to return to the license question: it was known when the Reciprocity Treaty was repealed that that dangerous organization—the Fenian brotherhood—was in existence, not so much in Ireland as in the United States; and moreover there were great doubts whether the authorities in the States were serious in opposing the designs of the Fenians, therefore the Imperial Government was anxious that no untoward circumstance should arise between the two countries, during last year. And knowing as they did that the fisheries on these coasts had been an apple of discord ever since the treaty of Ghent, and that there was a large amount of capital invested in the business in the states of Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, they thought rather than disturb this trade and thus cause dissatisfaction, it would be better for all the Colonies to grant licenses to American citizens to fish irrespective of treaty limites on these coasts, not so much for the purpose of raising revenue, as to gain an admission of title, so that if any question should hereafter arise between the Colonies and the United States in reference to the fisheries, the Americans would have to acknowledge the construction which the Imperial Government had put upon the treaty of Ghent. Canada assented to this proposition, and so did New Brunswick and this Island; but Nova Scotia sent home a minute of Council objecting to it altogether, to which the Imperial Government replied that if Nova Scotia would not carry out their views she must protect her own fisheries. The Nova Scotia government then reconsidered the matter, and agreed to the license system, whereupon the Imperial Gov-

ernment sent a fleet into the Gulf to see that licenses were taken from the Colonial authorities. The fee charged, however, as compared with the duty exacted on our fish when taken to the American market, was a mere bagatelle. The House had as yet no intimation of the policy of the present Government, with respect to these licenses. As the Session was about to close he thought it would be well to give hon members some idea as to the mode in which the Government intended to treat the fishery question—whether they proposed to deal with it on their own responsibility or in harmony with the action of the Imperial Government.

Hon. LEADER OF THE GOVERNMENT said that no later than yesterday His Excellency had received a despatch on this subject; but the Government had not yet decided to make public any action on the question. Of this, however, the House might rest assured, that they were as ready to protect the rights of our fishermen as were the late Government. The amount charged for licenses last year was very trifling indeed; and as had been said, was simply to get an acknowledgment from the Americans of our right to the fisheries. It was generally thought in the other Provinces now that if licenses were continued, the charge for them should be a great deal higher; and he concurred in this view of the question. It was a great privilege which the Americans had enjoyed for several years past, that of fishing freely in our waters; and he believed that the United States Government were not informed as to the advantages which their citizens reaped in this way from the Reciprocity Treaty. That Government appeared determined to make as much out of the Provinces as they could; but he agreed with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that they were getting the worst of the bargain. As far as our fisheries were concerned, he believed the consideration for them that would be most acceptable would be to get the Americans to agree to Reciprocity again; they ought either to take the duty off our produce or give free trade altogether. As long, however, as they could obtain fishing licenses at the rate they were granted last year, they would care very little about the matter, considering the duty that was now in their favour. All he would say in conclusion was, that the Government here would be prepared to carry out, in concert with the other Provinces, any arrangement with respect to increasing the sum charged for licenses.

Mr. BRECKEN.—The subject before the House was one of the utmost importance to this Island. There was probably no other country which had, in proportion to its size, so large an amount of wealth in the waters surrounding it. He believed that it was the duty of the Government to encourage the prosecution of the fisheries, especially since the American Government, following out their Japanese policy, had placed a duty of \$2 in gold upon mackerel. The effect of this duty was felt by every fisherman, and therefore numbers were yearly leaving the Island, since they could fish in American vessels with more profit to themselves. If no encouragement was afforded here, all our skilled fishermen would leave the country, and it would be difficult to estimate the loss which the Colony would suffer. He was aware that the system of bounties was open to many grave objections, but believed that if the Government had